

FROM *JOKUN* TO *ONNAGATA*:
PERFORMANCE, AESTHETICS, AND THE CULTIVATION OF FEMININITY DURING
THE EDO PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

As the portrayal of women in Japanese woodblock prints produced during Japan's Edo period (1603–1868) remains an understudied area, the objective of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of the idealized female image. My research investigates how the idealized female image was established, cultivated, and circulated during the latter half of the Edo period. Throughout this thesis, focus will be given to the feminine idealized image, specifically the prescriptive ideals found in *bijin-ga* (prints of beautiful women) and the descriptive ideals expressed in *yakusha-e* (actor prints) of *onnagata*, male actors who portray female roles in Kabuki theater. Utilization of primary sources in the shape of prints and literature along with theories on gender performativity identifies how artists portrayed the feminine ideal. By conceptualizing *bijin-ga* and *yakusha-e* prints within its sociocultural context, there is evidence to suggest that Edo period woodblock prints contributed to the construction and circulation of idealized female imagery.

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INTRODUCTION

Depictions of women in Japanese woodblock prints from the Edo period (1603–1868) reflect the creation and circulation of an idealized female image, as well as the then-current discourse of women's overall position within Japanese society. In particular, prints of beautiful women known as *bijin-ga* 美人画 and actor prints known as *yakusha-e* 役者絵 represent predominantly male perspectives on femininity amongst the print-making and print-buying population. Amid themes found in *bijin-ga* prints, on the one hand, are designs that serve as illustrations of instruction manuals for women or *jokun* 女訓, which promoted certain modes of female customs and behaviors. On the other hand, *yakusha-e* prints featuring *onnagata* 女形, male actors who specialized in female roles in Kabuki theater, present questions of how a male figure might embody a female ideal, and how artists captured this transposed ideal in prints. Since the portrayal of Edo-period women in Japanese woodblock prints remains an understudied topic, the purpose of this research is to rectify insufficient understanding by identifying how the portrayal of idealized women in Japanese prints established, reinforced, or spread standards of feminine behavior.

In order to determine how women were portrayed in Edo period Japan, I refer to primary visual sources, namely, woodblock prints published during the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. I also made use of primary literary sources, such as *Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna Daigaku* 女大学, 1715), one of the better known examples of *jokun* texts, and *Words of Ayame* (*Ayamegusa* あやめ草), the recorded thoughts of a famous *onnagata* actor, part of a larger treatise on Kabuki acting entitled *The Actors' Analects* (*Yakusha Rongo* 役者論語, 1783). Both of these texts reveal the Edo-period thought that femininity is not innate to the female sex,

but is attained through education and practice of socially acceptable feminine behavior and manners. It is my position that these texts are significant for their influence on the subjects depicted in the prints discussed in this thesis. The evidence I have amassed also suggests Edo-period artists preferred to portray women engaging in virtuous actions as part of a standardized mode of depicting conventional forms of beauty.

Conceptualization of the idealized female image during the latter half of the Edo period took place inside a rigid social hierarchical system espoused by the Tokugawa government, one that repudiated fluid internal movement. Laws were passed to maintain the Neo-Confucian social order to ensure everyone stayed within the social rank into which they were born. This social class structure was arranged with samurai on the top, followed by farmers or peasants, then artisans, and, finally, merchants on the bottom. The final two groups are important because they were predominantly urban townspeople, known as *chōnin* 町人, the largest demographic to consume prints. This group was integral to the discourse of the idealized female image due to being the largest contributors to its production and consumption.

Chapter One opens with a discussion about literary sources and the sociocultural discourse surrounding *jokun* including their purpose as instructional manuals on female etiquette, behaviors, and morals. In addition to text from *jokun*, the agency of women in the establishment of idealized female images will also be addressed. The primary visual materials under study in this part will be prints taken from Torii Kiyonaga's series, *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* (*Fūzoku Azuma no nishiki* 風俗東之錦) and *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women* (*Jijo hōkun onna Imagawa* 児女寶訓女今川).¹ The first series presents customs and

¹ 「寶」 is an archaic kanji for 「宝」 meaning treasure. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston used the latter kanji in the title instead of the former for the *A Treasury of Admonitions to Young Ladies* series.

tasks deemed suitable for women. The second, based on a *jokun* by Sawada Kichi entitled *Imagawa for Women* (*Onna Imagawa* 女今川, 1700), emphasizes the role of the print images as tools to educate women through illustrating appropriate and inappropriate behavior. *Hokusai's Illustrated Imagawa for Women* (*Hokusai's Ehon Onna Imagawa* 北斎絵本女今川) by Katsushika Hokusai is featured to further facilitate discussion concerning the idealized female image towards the end of the Edo period. Analysis of these series together with contemporaneous literature confirms the significance of performativity in the construction of the female image. The final section of Chapter One is a close study of Utagawa Kunisada's *Tomoe Gozen* from his print series *Biographies of Famous Women Ancient and Modern* (*Kokin Meifuden* 古今名婦伝), in-depth analysis of which is intended to show how *bijin-ga* imagery helped establish and reinforce ideals of femininity during the Edo period. In this section, visual theorist Griselda Pollock's use of the term "sexual difference" will be introduced in order to describe how Kunisada defined Tomoe's femininity in his print.

Continuing discourse surrounding the performativity of femininity, Chapter Two focuses on artists' visual representations of *onnagata* as illustrated in *yakusha-e* prints. A brief outline of Kabuki theater's history serves to account for how *onnagata* became performers of an idealized female image. In order to better navigate my research, I will consider how gender performativity theories by Judith Butler, Kathrine Mezur, and Maki Isaka illuminate this material. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* argues that sex like gender is constructed by culture. Butler's discussion about drag in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," contends that gender is an imitation of a non-existent original.² Both Maki and Isaka,

² Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss, (New York: Routledge, 1991), 21.

incorporated Butler's theories on gender performativity in their analysis of *onnagata* performance of gender, although their area of research is Kabuki theater.

In Mezur's book *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Female-Likeness*, she argues *onnagata* of the eighteenth century were not restricted to operating under an imitation of women, Edo-period feminine ideal, or the female body, rather their performances of femininity superseded Edo-period conventions of gender by focusing on the surface of the character. In her book, Mezur frequently cites Butler's *Gender Trouble* in order to situate her definition of *onnagata*'s gender performance as a result of the repetition of "gender acts." Her concept of gender acts, namely, "actions being produced by material bodies of the performers for the purpose of producing gender."³ Gender acts consist of a series of stylized gestures known as *kata*, costuming, and imitation of feminine behaviors through observation. In *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theater* by Maki Isaka, she employs Butler's citation as imitation to argue that was the only method *onnagata* could participate in the development of femininity.⁴ This in particular, I believe will be useful in addressing the various visual evidence presented in *yakusha-e* prints.

Playing with the term ideal, my thesis broaches the quandary of what the ideal female image signified during the Edo period. Research in Chapter One positions the feminine ideal as one led by prescriptive descriptions. First, *fūzoku* draw attention to the practice of customs deemed permissible for females to observe by society. As for *jokun*, illustrated manuals or prints inspired by them, dogmatic perspectives on female behavior gave viewers examples of proper female behavior in the form of female exemplars and degenerate women, in doing so, viewers

³ Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Female-Likeness*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2005), 46.

⁴ Maki Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theater*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 71.

learned about appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Chapter Two contains work predominantly centered on more descriptive representations of gender acts by *onnagata* as seen in *yakusha-e* prints.

To further discuss the role of *onnagata* as describers of an idealized femininity, images of these actors will be considered in tandem with the *Words of Ayame*, analects uttered by Yoshizawa Ayame (1673–1719), a notable early Edo-period *onnagata* that provides advice and anecdotes on *onnagata* performativity. To understand the modes of depicting *onnagata* in *yakusha-e* prints, it is also important to consider depictions of women in *bijin-ga* prints as models, as well as the model provided by *wakashū* 若衆, a term used for beautiful boys or young men. Discussion of Ishikawa Toyonobu's print *A Triptych of Three Young Men (Wakashū Sanpuku Tsui* 若衆三幅対), Suzuki Harunobu's work *Woman Putting on a Large Straw Hat (Amigasa ni te wo yaru musume* 編笠に手をやる娘), and Katsukawa Shunjō's print *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire (Sandaime Segawa Kikunojō no Yūjo* 三代目瀬川菊之丞遊女), three different prints that feature either *bijin* or *wakashū* in similar poses, confirms the circulation of motifs and mannerisms amongst different print subjects. Critical to the topic of gender performativity in *yakusha-e* prints is the role of *kata*, the term use for standardized and stylized body poses that form part of the Kabuki actor's repertoire, since some *kata* were used to standardize the *onnagata* actor's performance of female gender acts. Finally, Chapter Two closes with case studies of *onnagata* in several Kabuki role types (*yakugara* 役柄), first the virtuous courtesan, and second, the loyal wife. Combined with the evidence amassed from the previous sections, I will endeavor to identify how *yakusha-e* prints represented different types of virtuous women.

CHAPTER ONE: THE FEMALE IMAGE AND IDEALS OF FEMININITY

1-1 *Jokun: Greater Learning for Women and Imagawa for Women*

This section will provide literary and historical context about the production, circulation, and purpose of *jokun*, and present examples of woodblock prints that either illustrate *jokun* precepts, or show their inspiration. *Jokun* like *Greater Learning for Women* and *Imagawa for Women* were not only intended to circulate moralistic codes fitting of a woman's instruction but, as written by Elizabeth Lillehoj, also functioned by "entertaining a consuming audience to supporting a patriarchal ideology and an emerging nationalism."⁵ The Tokugawa government enforced moral codes to maintain a strict social hierarchy which regulated the status quo of the populace as the government saw fit. Books about morality were not published by the government itself, rather the precepts within the pages of these books conformed to the same Neo-Confucian moral ideology as the government propagated.

In *Fertility and Pleasure: Ritual and Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan*, historian William R. Lindsey uses the term "unitized society" to describe the compartmentalization caused by institutionalized Neo-Confucianism and the caste system enforced by the Tokugawa government.⁶ These units consisted of one's place in society (merchant, artisan, samurai, farmer) and within the family unit (mother/wife, parents, child, father/husband). Even though texts such as *Greater Learning for Women* were originally for women of the samurai class, by the mid-eighteenth century, according to Susan Griswold, *chōnin* subscribed to the philosophy of loyalty

⁵ Elizabeth Lillehoj, "Properly Female: Illustrated Books of Morals for Women in Edo Japan," in *Women, Gender and Art in Asia c. 1500–1900*, ed. Melia Belli Bose (New York: Routledge, 2016), 230.

⁶ William R. Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure: Ritual and Sexual Values in Tokugawa*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 16.

and morality held by the samurai class.⁷ In the case of *chōnin* women, they adopted the prudish precepts written for women of the samurai class.

Upon examination of *Greater Learning for Women*'s text, the position females held was one of subservience. The chapter titled "The Wife's Miscellaneous Duties" describes how a wife should treat her husband:

A woman has no particular lord. She must look to her husband as her lord, and must serve him with all worship and reverence, not despising or thinking lightly of him. The great lifelong duty of a woman is obedience. In her dealings with her husband, both the expression of her countenance and style of her address should be courteous, humble, and conciliatory, never peevish and intractable, never rude and arrogant—that should be a woman's first and chiefest care. When the husband issues his instructions, the wife must never disobey them.⁸

Both sexes were expected to perform the duty their gender required of them. But, in the case of women, they were essentially denied a place in the discussion of the performance of femininity.

Rather, as Griswold wrote in her article "Sexuality, Textuality, and the Definition of the Feminine in Late Eighteenth-Century Japan," women were "expected to conform to, and perform in daily practice, the rigidly prescribed forms of feminine status and conduct prescribed by men."

⁹ In sum, the quotes identify Edo-period society's expectation for wives to prioritize the needs and desires of their husbands and his family above their own. In addition, the excerpt from *Greater Learning for Women* and Griswold's statement highlights a period when Japanese women's social status was at its lowest and when women seldom held active roles in defining femininity.¹⁰

⁷ Susan Griswold, "Sexuality, Textuality, and the Definition of the Feminine in Late Eighteenth-Century Japan," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, no. 9 (1995), 59.

⁸ Ken Hoshino, Introduction to *The Way of Contentment and Women and Wisdom of Japan*, (Washington, D.C.: University of Publications of America, INC., 1913) 55. This text is a compilation of two books by Kaibara Ekken. Each book has its own set of page numbers.

⁹ Griswold, "Sexuality, Textuality, and the Definition of the Feminine," 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

However, this is not to say women were completely absent from disseminating their own ideas about femininity. There are known instances of Edo-period women's contribution to the discourse of the feminine performativity which predominantly took the shape of women aligning with the ideological episteme of their male contemporaries. For instance, a widely circulated *jokun* besides *Greater Learning for Women* was *Imagawa for Women* (1700) written by a woman known as Sawada Kichi. The text consists of a list of orders concerning proper behavior and attitudes women should or should not engage in. Besides literature, the Shingaku (Heart Learning) movement included female disciples who disseminated the movement's rhetoric. Established in 1729 by Ishida Baigan (1685–1744), a merchant, the Shingaku movement viewed the decline in morality was a result of the expansion of the economic market.¹¹ In an effort to remedy this issue, the movement encouraged male *chōnin* to apply a moralistic approach to commerce. However, Shingaku theorists perceived women to be detrimental to their moralistic social system due to a woman's "anatomy and attendant vices." Thus, women required "moral rehabilitation" based on adherence to sex and gender roles.¹² Female disciples often gave lectures in a form of parables: a combination of Shingaku teachings together with local anecdotes. The impact of ideologies concerning femininity disseminated through *jokun* and movements on Edo-period Japan can be seen in prints produced during the period.

Women during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, besides being mothers and wives, held occupations as courtesans, prostitutes, teahouse waitresses, bathhouse attendants, nuns, farmers, and servants. In "Imagining Working Women in Early Modern Japan," Yokota Furuhiiko divided occupations Edo-period women held into six groups. Occupations mentioned in this chapter included the following: small businesses where the husband and wife worked

¹¹ Jennifer Robertson, "The Shingaku Woman: Straight from the Heart," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 89.

¹² Ibid.

cooperatively, piece-meal work women did during spare moments at home, and domestic work.¹³

The types of women initially targeted by *jokun* writers were women in the samurai class.

However, as the kinds of women who read *jokun* expanded beyond the warrior class to include *chōnin* women, publishers of *jokun* began to market to them as well.¹⁴ In many ways, prints from Torii Kiyonaga's (1752–1815) series reflect the positions and social standards implicit of late eighteenth century Japanese womanhood.

In addition to images of women at work, Kiyonaga's series *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* (*Fūzoku Azuma no nishiki* 風俗東之錦) (1783–84) and *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women* (*Jijo hōkun onna Imagawa* 児女寶訓女今川) (1784) provide illustrations of women as exemplars of morality or manners promoted as ideal for women. Women in *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women* are *bijin-ga* prints which illustrate behaviors from the precepts of *Imagawa for Women*, several examples of which we will examine. Characteristic of Kiyonaga's feminine ideal are round faces and statuesque physiques which are outfitted with fashionable hairstyles and attire of the time. According to Chie Hirano, writings from sources contemporaneous to Kiyonaga suggests the ideal female form he illustrated differed from popular physical characteristics of the Tenmei era (1781–1789). For instance, women with “slender figures of medium height,” was this era's physical ideal.¹⁵ If so, then what significance does the physical feminine ideal possess in Kiyonaga's portrayal of women? Also, does it contribute to the message his prints convey with regards to the female image as a whole?

¹³ Yokota Furuhiiko, “Imagining Working Women in Early Modern Japan,” from *Women and Class in Japanese History*, eds. Hitomi Tonomura, Anne Walthall, and Wakita Haruko, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 161.

¹⁴ Lillehoj, “Properly Female,” 246.

¹⁵ Chie Hirano, *Kiyonaga: A Study of His Life and Works*, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1939), 92.

Regarding Kiyonaga's series, I argue that the tasks in which Kiyonaga's women engaged, their behaviors, and their manners are all situated in prescriptive visual representations of the feminine ideal rather than the feminine ideal. This contrasts with ideal physical conventions of feminine beauty. Prints from the latter half of the Edo period appear to value conventions of virtue rather than cohesive conventions of beauty for the idealized female image. Kiyonaga's series *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* overall theme is on the customs and manners of women, although it does shed light on his conventions of beauty. Accordingly, the following section ventures to contemplate Kiyonaga's female subjects' customs and behaviors.

1-2 Female roles: *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* and *Greater Learning for Women*

Seeing that it is a girl's destiny, on reaching womanhood, to go to a new home, and live in submission to her father-in-law, it is even more incumbent upon her than it is on a boy to receive with all the reverence her parents' instructions.¹⁶

Brocades of the East in Daily Life indicates a trail marking momentous occasions in a girl's life along her path towards womanhood from coming-of-age ceremonies to raising children. As a *fūzoku* (manners and customs) series, it portrays women participating in various acts associated with the female sex. As per the meaning of *fūzoku*, subjects covered stress the importance of custom in general. By illustrating practices women engaged in *fūzoku* as found in this series, Kiyonaga conveys customs society considered as acceptable behavior. The above quote from *Greater Learning for Women* offers an explanation for why females were portrayed in this type of subject matter. The text describes womanhood was to be a life spent serving her husband's household. From this perspective, the presence of courtesans and prostitutes may be perceived as antithetical of laudable feminine behavior and customs. Prostitutes and other discouraged

¹⁶ Kaibara Ekken, *The Way of contentment and Women and Wisdom of Japan*, trans. Ken Hoshino, (Washington, D.C.: University of Publications of America, INC., 1913), 33.

occupations were figures women were discouraged from venerating in prescriptive imagery. The women in Kiyonaga's series demonstrate prescriptive behaviors.

From an early age, ceremonies celebrate the passage through childhood, especially, *shichi-go-san* (seven-five-three), which is held on November 15th.¹⁷ For example, the print *Obitoki* (fig. 1) depicts a girl observing an *obitoki* ceremony. Held during *shichi-go-san*, seven-year old girls discarded their *tsuke-himo* (a sash worn by children) and wore an adult *obi* sash for the first time. After the ceremony, parents brought their children to the shrines of their tutelary gods, then to greet family and friends.¹⁸ The girl, held up in the center of the composition is dressed in an oversized kimono, is accompanied by maidservants one of whom holds the train of her kimono. By way of ceremony, the print introduces customary behavior held in prints focused on ideal feminine performance. In the section of *Greater Learning for Women* titled "Demarcation Between the Sexes," Ekken wrote that from a young age girls should "observe the line of demarcation separating women from men."¹⁹ In this section, the demarcation Ekken was referring to are customs that separate men from women. A young lady's successful observation was accomplished by following the customs and teachings her parents guided her through. Observation of the differences between the sexes demanded a woman to follow a set of prescribed practices in order to preserve her and her family's reputations in society. Consequently, *Obitoki* illustrates a young girl following her parents' customs on her path towards womanhood.

Another print from *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* is *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby* (fig. 2) which depicts women with a child. This print explicitly shows an

¹⁷ *Shichi-go-san* celebrates a child passing through the age markers of three, five, and seven years of age. During the ceremony parents pray for the continuance of their child's good health.

¹⁸ Hirano, *Kiyonaga*, 16–17.

¹⁹ Ekken, *Women and Wisdom*, 34.

interaction between a mother and her child through the lens of mother as playmate.²⁰ In this print, the downward gaze of the young woman directs the viewer to the mother holding her son, their gazes are fixed on one another. Additionally, the son's hand touching his mother's cheek dissolves the gap between their gazes. As with *Obitoki*, in the sparse background *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby*, emphasizes the events transpiring before the viewer. If we situate this print with other prints like *Obitoki* which show women engaged in momentous moments of a child's life, mothers/women are revealed as nurturing overseers of a child's development. In the case of *Obitoki* and *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby*, the viewer is provided examples of females from a young age observing female customs and carrying themselves in a manner becoming of their sex. Consequently, Edo-period women were provided a template of customs and acceptable occupational position for themselves to observe. By illustrating females from a young age performing prescriptive acts, Kiyonaga's *fūzoku* series indicates *fūzoku*'s role as informative reservoirs on customary feminine behavior. *Obitoki* accomplished this through illustrating a coming-of-age ceremony, while *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby* concentrated on the relationship between mother and child. Despite being a staple in *bijin-ga* prints, *fūzoku* were not the sole form of prescribed values on femininity in circulation, as Kiyonaga's *A Young Girl's Education from the Imagawa for Women* will exhibit.

1-3 Education through Vices: Kiyonaga and *Imagawa for Women*

If we look at *A Woman Who Neglects Her Husband's Parents Invites Criticism* from *A Young Girl's Education from the Imagawa for Women* (fig. 3), we see two young women and

²⁰ Marcia Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 145.

one elderly woman illustrating the nineteenth precept from *Imagawa for Women*.²¹ The cartouche reads *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women*, the title taken from the text within the print states:

*Shūto shūtome no shomatshi ni shite
hito no soroshiri wo urukoto*

A woman who neglects her parent-in-law lays herself open to public censure.²²

The women in the foreground pausing from their leisurely activities to engage in a conversation. One woman appears to be tuning her shamisen while the wife momentarily sets aside her songbook. Separating the foreground from the background is a small partition; beyond that we see an elderly woman, evidently the mother-in-law. She herself is engaging in her own activity, needlework. Focusing on her face, we can note the intense expression of concentration vis-à-vis the thread held tightly in her mouth with eyes squinting through glasses as she attempts to thread the needle.

The women in *A Woman Who Neglects Her Husband's Parents Invites Criticism* are deliberately ignoring the struggles of the mother-in-law for their own benefit. Consequences a wife may face if she was not loyal to her household could result in divorce for being disobedient towards her in-laws.²³ As per the codes of filial piety requiring one to be dutiful towards their parents, the daughter-in-law is not fulfilling her duty. Ergo, this print's title reflects the wife's precarious situation since neglect could result in the end of her marriage.

This print like the rest from its series amplifies the text's message. In the case of *A Woman Who Neglects Her Husband's Parents Invites Criticism*, the message is failing to care for

²¹ Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, 52. For a list of the precepts from *Imagawa for Women*, please see the Appendix.

²² Hirano, *Kiyonaga*, 353. The romanized text and translations are taken from Hirano's book instead of the MFA: Boston titles for consistent translation.

²³ Ekken, *Women and Wisdom*, 36.

one's in-laws incurs the criticism of the public. The print's contents illustrate a woman who has succumbed to the "five infirmities" listed in *Greater Learning for Women* and *Imagawa for Women's* canons of conduct. From *Greater Learning for Women*, the five infirmities were: jealousy, indocility, discontent, slander, and silliness.²⁴ Since the young woman in this print is neglecting her duties thus troubling her family, she demonstrates attitudes of women who are afflicted by silliness. Furthermore, in taking the text verbatim from *Imagawa for Women*, the artist explicitly communicates which types of behavior begets social scrutiny. Adding to the conversation is a print concerning the infirmity jealousy from *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women*.

A Jealous Woman (fig. 4), like the previous one, also transmits a message through the portrayal of an amoral scene. Referring to the eleventh precept from *Imagawa for Women*, the print reads:

Tanryo nishite shito no kokoro fukaku
Hito no soshiri wo kaeerimizaru koto

A woman who is hot-tempered and extremely jealous
 does not heed the criticism of others about herself.²⁵

In the print, a wife is depicted reading a letter from her husband's drawer, its contents are strewn across the floor. Engrossed in the letter's contents, she ignores her sister's stare. Much like *A Woman Who Neglects Her Husband's Parents Invites Criticism*, the viewer is invited to critique this unprincipled woman. Within a sociocultural context, both prints are indicative of an overarching theme of self-policing in order to prevent falling prey to the judgment of an ever-

²⁴ Ekken, *Women and Wisdom*, 44.

²⁵ Hirano, *Kiyonaga*, 353.

watching society. Furthermore, both texts use the word *soshiri* meaning “judgment” or “criticism” heightening their respective images impact.²⁶

Kiyonaga’s series were not alone in their transmission of the ideal female image. Other artists such as Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) and Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) also contributed. These artists may differ in the types of women they depicted, but their prints share an overall theme of the virtuous or loyal woman. According to Lillehoj, as the numbers of female consumers who purchased *jokun* increased over the latter part of the Edo period, publishers introduced new role models and books such as illustrated books (*ehon* 絵本), to maintain and grow their base.²⁷

1-4 The Idealized Female Image during the Late Edo period

Despite the final decades of the Edo period being marked by political, social, and economic upheaval that resulted in an overall distaste for the Tokugawa government, it saw a surge in depictions of other types of female ideals.²⁸ The following section introduces images from *Hokusai’s Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* (*Hokusai ehon onna Imagawa* 北斎絵本女今川) and Kunisada’s *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern* (*Kokin meifudin* 古今名婦伝) as case studies of ideal prescribed female images during the last forty years of the Edo period.

Hokusai’s Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women, published in 1828, offers moral guidance and information on etiquette for women. The text of this illustrated book is based on

²⁶ Modern translations of *soshiri* 「誹り」 include slander; libel; disparage. In the case of both texts, I elected to go with the meaning of the terms produced by the MFA: Boston (judgment) and Chie Hirano (censure). In addition, for consistency, I decided to follow Hirano’s transliteration ‘soroshi’ instead of MFA: Boston’s ‘soroshiri’ as it appears consistent to the contemporary spelling of the word.

²⁷ Lillehoj, “Properly Female,” 246.

²⁸ William E. Deal, *Handbook to Life in Medieval and Early Modern Japan*, (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2005), 14.

Imagawa Sadayo's (1326–1420) *Testament of Imagawa (Imagawajō 今川状)*. The illustrated book contains examples of virtuous women such as nuns and shrine maidens, as well as of various activities or events in which women engaged. The book contains images Hokusai designed prior to its production, which were later selected by a compiler and then randomly interspersed throughout the text.²⁹ Consequently, this book represents the publisher's opinion on female virtue rather than Hokusai's. The thirty-two-page book includes thirteen illustrations, all of which seem to fall into the following categories: religious, violent, domestic, and work. Among the most intriguing are illustrations of women committing acts of violence or participating in religious activities, for these two types occupy opposite poles of morality – iniquity and virtue.

One such illustration from this series, *Iwafuji Beating Onoe* (fig. 5), encompasses these extremes. The story focuses on Iwafuji and Onoe, maids of honor to the Prince of Kaga. Iwafuji who held a higher status than Onoe, enjoyed tormenting Onoe, as illustrated in this print. Here Iwafuji is shown at a temple with a sandal raised above her head while Onoe braces herself for the blow. After the beating, Onoe commits ritual suicide, leaving behind a letter disclosing Iwafuji's betrayal of the prince. Subsequently, Iwafuji meets her demise when Ohatsu, Onoe's maidservant, discovers the letter and exacts vengeance on Iwafuji by killing her and reporting Iwafuji's act of treason to the prince.³⁰ Onoe, in her unrelenting loyalty to her master, serves as an ideal representation of womanly virtue, while Iwafuji is her polar opposite, positions illustrated by Hokusai's deft arrangement.

Iwafuji Beating Onoe offers two ways its viewers can experience the story, as the outsider observing the scene and as Onoe herself. On the left page, poised for the blow, Onoe

²⁹ Lillehoj, "Properly Female," 246.

³⁰ Jack Hiller, *The Art of Hokusai in Book Illustrations*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 204-205.

turns her head away from the viewer. In obscuring Onoe's face, I submit Hokusai allowed for readers to virtually experience Onoe's virtue, or, at least better relate to her position. Secondly, by illustrating the sandal beating scene, Iwafuji's actions are comparable to the amoral women from Kiyonaga's series *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women*. Examination of the scene with the text of *Imagawa for Women* indicates the print conflicts with the seventh, eighth, and seventeenth admonitions. For example, the eighth admonition commands women not to "disparage or think inferior people who follow the proper way." Thus, by constantly belittling a person of a lower station out of spite, Hokusai situates Iwafuji as an embodiment of amorality. Moreover, due to jealousy, Iwafuji is abusing her station, therefore failing to understand her place in society, which is a transgression of the seventeenth admonition. Finally, in the Kabuki play *Kagamiyama*, Iwafuji's reasons for betraying her master are revealed to be the desire for his property. This act violates the seventh admonition because she turns her "back on the proper way in order to covet and pursue profit."³¹ Parenthetically, illustrations from this series were not restricted to the behaviors of women but extended into broaching a woman's influence within her family.

In *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, Marcia Yonemoto proposes many arguments about the structure of the Japanese family with special regard to women. One of her main arguments is that the structure of the family unit meant a woman's role was more complex than child rearing and being a virtuous wife, since women frequently occupied domestic roles and performed femininity associated with virtue, grace and filial piety; furthermore, she suggests

³¹Natsuko Inoue, "New (Neo) Kabuki" *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel Leiter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 197. For more details on the play *Kagamiyama* and other versions refer to pages 197–198. *Kagamiyama* was first created for Bunraku (puppet theater) in 1782. In 1783 it was adapted for the Kabuki stage. The story itself is inspired by two events which occurred during the Edo period 1) "the revenge of a lady-in-waiting of at Matsudaira's palace in 1724 and 2) issues faced by the rulers of the Kaga province, the Maeda family, from the 1740s-50s. For other details see <https://www.kabuki21.com/kagamiyama.php>.

that women were in control of how they used their power.³² Since many of Hokusai's illustrations from *Hokusai's Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* depict women engaging in work outside of the home or occupying stations of power as sources of wisdom, they coincide with Yonemoto's argument.

The tale of the Zen nun of Matsushita from the Kamakura period (1185–1333) (fig. 6) presents an example of a woman serving as a source of knowledge. The unnamed nun, located in the upper left corner, is shown repairing a paper screen one pane at a time. Yoshikage, her brother and the vice-governor of Akita Castle, sits across the table. As the tale goes, Yoshikage tells her not to fix the screen and allow him to call for a servant to repair it to which she replies, “I am sure your servant's work would not be better than mine.”³³ Continuing to repair only the damaged parts, the nun explains to her brother her desire to demonstrate to her son how this action parallels governing a country, because a nation should not be repaired through radical funding, but rather “through thrift.” In other words, instead of wasting funds on a complete overhaul, the nun showed that broken parts must be repaired as they come as is it more economical. In this way, her comment served as an analogy to the art of governing a nation.³⁴ With respect to the female image, the unnamed nun is sharing the great wisdom which came with her station with her family members. Therefore, she supports Yonemoto's argument by reflecting the multifaceted social positions women occupied and demonstrating the agency women exerted. Yonemoto mentioned demonstrating the agency women could exert. Compositionally, the nun and her brother are located on two different pages— her virtuous act on the left page, and her brother and his entourage on the right. In contrast to the composition of *Iwafuji Beating Onoe*

³² Marcia Yonemoto, Introduction to *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*, 13.

³³ Kenko Yoshida, *Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kengo*, trans. Donald Keene, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 157.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

where the viewer is encouraged to virtually experience Onoe's torment, the viewer occupies the position of observer and receiver of the nun's wisdom much like Yoshikage and his entourage.

The Zen Nun of Matsushita in the book is an example of a woman serving in an advisory position. Whereas women in Kiyonaga's series *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women* portrays improper behavior, *Hokusai's Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* features women as moral exemplars and reputable women. In other words, illustrations from the book provided visual reinforcements of good behavior while discouraging condemnable actions. Furthermore, according to Lilliehoj, the nun's actions indicate that virtuous women can occupy stations of great wisdom; therefore, the image's significance rests in Hokusai presenting an example of a woman whose actions can be a great resource to men.³⁵ In addition, Hokusai's illustrations not only included scenes present in *fūzoku*, but also examples of women from past periods, a trend also present in prints from the last ten years of the Edo period which is otherwise known as the Bakumatsu ("closing") period.

1-5: Kunisada and the Idealized Female Image

The female body functioned as a site of signifiers; in *fūzoku* and *jokun* related prints, the female body was differentiated by the dominant gender's definition of femininity. "Sexual difference" is the term Griselda Pollock used to refer to the production of sex and gender. In "Trouble in the Archives," Pollock explains that rather than the bodies of men and women being innately different, culture and society determines how men and women are differentiated.³⁶ Books of morals such as *The Way of Contentment and Women and Wisdom of Japan*, coupled with *Imagawa for Women*, were literature produced and consumed by the people differentiated the sexes by defining which attributes each sex possessed.

³⁵ Lilliehoj, "Properly Female," 24.

³⁶ Griselda Pollock, "Trouble in the Archives," *Looking Back to the Future: Essays in art, life, and death*, ed. Penny Florence, (Amsterdam: G&B Arts International, 2001), 24.

Kunisada's print series *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern* (*Kokin meifudin* 古今名婦伝) depicts prominent Japanese women from throughout Japanese history engaged in meritorious acts, much like Hokusai's *Zen Nun of Matsushita*. According to The National Diet Library Online Public Access Catalog, the series consists of thirty-four prints published from 1859–1866.³⁷ In addition to the text, Kunisada differentiated each woman by their dress, hair, and accouterments rather than individualized faces. Among the historical figures included in this series is Tomoe Gozen (fig. 7).

Tomoe Gozen was a female warrior believed to have lived during the tenth and eleventh centuries and fought alongside her lord and lover Kiso no Yoshinaka (1154–1184), a member of the Minamoto clan, during the Genpei War (1180–1185). Records and accounts in the *Tale of Heike* (*Heike Monogatari* 平家物語) and a fourteenth-century text called *Records of the Rise and Fall of Genpei* (*Genpei jōsuiki* 源平盛衰記) portray Tomoe as a skilled warrior.³⁸ In 1183, Yoshinaka promoted her to the rank of one of his main commanders which placed her in the position to lead troops into battle. An account of Tomoe's military acumen is mentioned in *Records of the Rise and Fall of Genpei* in which she led a troop of 1,000 men at the Battle of Kurikawa in 1183.³⁹ In another battle in 1184, Yoshinaka and his forces were outnumbered but instead of allowing himself to be captured or killed by his enemies, Yoshinaka decided to commit ritual suicide. Before doing so, he ordered Tomoe to leave, despite her wishes to commit suicide alongside him. She obeyed but was captured by the enemy, and sentenced to death.

³⁷ The National Diet Library Online Public Access Catalog (*Kokuritsu Kaikkan Toshokan Dejitaru Korekushon*), "Kokin Meifuden: Tomoe Gozen" ("Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern: Tomoe Gozen") last modified 2011, accessed January 26, 2017, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1304222/1>.

³⁸ R.C. Lutz, "Tomoe Gozen, Samurai Warrior," *Critical Survey of Mythology and Folklore: Heroes and Heroines*, (Amenia, NY: Grey House Publishing, Inc., 2013), 189-191.

³⁹ Steven T. Brown, "From Woman Warrior to Peripatetic Entertainer: The Multiple Histories of Tomoe," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jun., 1998), pp. 183-199, accessed January 26, 2017, Harvard-Yenching Institute, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2652649>.

During her time in custody, Wada Yoshimori, also known as Wada no Kotaro, a military commander, fell in love with Tomoe and got her pardoned. According to this story, the two married and had a son called Asahina Yoshihide, and when her husband eventually died, it is said she became a nun.⁴⁰

In *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern*, Kunisada depicts the female warrior Tomoe Gozen in a manner which contradicts her description in *The Tale of Heike*. Generally, Tomoe is shown wearing armor, a headband, wielding a *nanigata* polearm and engaging in battle, reflecting her martial reputation. The only visual identifier of the figure as Tomoe Gozen, besides the inscription in the red cartouche, is her crest, known as a *tomoemon* in the *migidomoe* configuration, three comma-like patterns moving counterclockwise inside a circle.⁴¹ Instead of the image of a strong female warrior, the viewer is given an image of a woman in a more or less domestic role. The scene portraying her shaving a child's head is one frequently illustrated in Kitagawa Utamaro's work. Before engaging this aspect of the print, it is necessary to address the text located at the top of the print.

Tomoe Gozen was Yoshinaka Kiso's mistress when the Battle of Awazu broke out. Ishida Tomohisa's reserve forces defeated Yoshinaka. Wada Yoshimori was captured and he noticed Tomoe's physical strength. He [Yoshinaka] begged the leader of the Imperial Guards for Tomoe's pardon. She became his wife and they had one child. The child was named Asahina Saburo Yoshihide. Asahina was killed in battle when he was 25. For the posthumous memorial service, hair was cut and they prayed for his happiness in the next life by chanting sutras to Amida Buddha and to give her [Tomoe] a long life till the age of 90.

Inversely / in this gloomy world / *mitsutomoe* / blinding moon / lights the mulberry tree.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lutz, "Tomoe Gozen, Samurai Warrior," 189-191.

⁴¹ "Tomoemon," Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System, last modified 2001, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/t/tomoemon.htm>.

⁴² "Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern" ("Kokin Meifuden"), accessed January 28, 2017, www.umesatoclub.com/~mojiquiz/PDF/Eshi_itiran/Toyokuni/kokon/06.html. The final line in the passage is a tanka poem. *Mitsutomoe* in the poem could allude to Tomoe as the design is often included on her clothing. In the print, *mitsutomoe* are present on her jacket and the bowl.

The text suggests Yoshihide, the young child identified as Tomoe and Yoshimori's son, will become a warrior. Rather than focus on the skill Tomoe exhibited on the battlefield, the text stresses her relationship with Yoshinaka, her role as Yoshimori's wife, and mother to a son. The visual and textual narratives of the print seem to indicate this story is one beyond reproach while in actuality Tomoe's life is quite shrouded in mystery especially after serving under Yoshinaka. The print presents another adaptation Tomoe Gozen's story, one where she lives on after the death of her lover, marries her enemy and gives birth to a son.⁴³ The print maintains its position as representing women in an idealized manner by depicting Tomoe caring for her young son.

The selection of this narrative by the publisher supplanted the predominant narrative of Tomoe's life by portraying her in another perspective. In this image, the traits not becoming of a woman (her life as a mistress) are eradicated by a version where she is no longer one, and fulfills her role of as a virtuous woman by marrying. By refocusing the image's narrative, Kunisada reaffirms the representation of the female body as a signifier of virtue. Therefore, Tomoe Gozen is no longer conflicting with Confucian code on chastity.⁴⁴ The framing of Tomoe and Asahina in a pyramidal format recalls the image of mother and child as previously seen in Kiyonaga's print *Women in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby*, a format which elicits softness from an intimate moment. The absence of a background demands one to fully devote one's gaze to this exchange between mother and son.

In the print's text there is a section about the capture by Yoshimori of Tomoe's clan and their eventual marriage after her clan's loss. However, the majority of the text focuses on Yoshimori and Tomoe's son Asahina; the second half of the text announces his birth, prowess on the battlefield, and concludes with his funeral service. The print's focus on a memorial service

⁴³ Lillehoj, "Properly Female," 242.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 243.

during the latter half of the Edo period and related aspects, as indicated by Lillehoj and Steven Brown, shows the increased interest in memorial services, and the role of a woman to manage funerary procedures of the household.⁴⁵ In addition, the text concentrated on the men in Tomoe's life and her household duties rather than her tactical acumen or physical strength unapologetically reestablish her identity as wife and mother first and a warrior second. This ideology was entrenched in samurai culture and as demonstrated in *Greater Learning for Women*, which argues that wifely duty was a desired trait for women to have.

In *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, Izano Nitobe in describing samurai codes of conduct before the Edo period wrote, "...a woman's surrender of herself to the good of her husband, home and family, was as willing and honorable as the man's self-surrender to the good of his lord and country."⁴⁶ The ideology of a woman's loyalty to her husband or family and chastity was perceived as equally virtuous as a male warrior fighting out on the battlefield was still propagated in Edo-period prints, but in a manner intended to resonate with the middle class. In this way, Nitobe's words lend themselves to the agency of the dutiful wife who prioritizes the well-being of her household responsibilities before herself.

Tomoe's gender representation is the product of multiple signals connected to the conceptualization of an idealized womanhood as reflected of her female status through the lens of the Edo period. In depicting Tomoe in a matronly way, *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern* marked a departure from the prior visual narrative of Tomoe Gozen.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the adaptation reinforces what these women are known for, which is in accordance

⁴⁵ Lillehoj, "Properly Female," 243.

⁴⁶ Izano Nitobe, *Bushido The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought*. (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1969) 146.

⁴⁷ Under a similar moniker to as *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern*, Utagawa Kuniyoshi's series, *One Hundred Stories of Famous Women of Japan since Ancient Time (Kokon honcho meijo hyakuden 古根本朝名女百伝)* (1843). While Kuniyoshi's series predates Kunisada's, his depiction of Tomoe Gozen presents her as the sole occupant of the composition. For examples of this series refer to the Museum of Fine Arts: Boston's website.

with ideas previously identified as signifiers of femininity and womanly endeavors. As this example suggests, *bijin-ga* prints provided an archetype for women on which to model their behavior and performativity.

CHAPTER TWO: PERFORMATIVITY OF *ONNAGATA* IN *YAKUSHA-E* PRINTS

Yakusha-e (actor prints) featuring male actors in female roles in Kabuki theater, otherwise known as *onnagata*, are, much like *bijin-ga* prints, a part of the narrative on illustrations of women in Japanese woodblock prints. This chapter will focus on gender performativity of *onnagata* in *yakusha-e* prints. First, I will examine the contents of *Words of Ayame*, an eighteenth-century text written by an *onnagata* actor discussing ideal feminine behavior. The second half acts to further supplement the discussion by providing an in-depth visual analysis of the types of female characters *onnagata* performed on stage. A number of prints are selected from “Essence of an *Onnagata*: Prints from 18th - to 20th-Century Japan,” an exhibition I curated at the Honolulu Museum of Art, and will help identify how *onnagata* portrayals of women established, reinforced, or disseminated ideals of femininity.

This chapter also draws upon Katherine Mezur’s concepts of gender acts and female-likeness as a framework to facilitate discussion on the methods *onnagata* used to produce an idealized female image, and to understand their relationship to the creation of the idealized female image in *yakusha-e* prints. As previously mentioned in the thesis’ introduction, “gender acts” refers to “actions being performed by material bodies of the performers for the purpose of producing gender.”⁴⁸ Female-likeness is the use of “gender acts” and models such as *wakashū*, an Edo-period term for attractive male youths, in order to build a female body. An *onnagata*’s gender acts do not aim to capture the epitome of femininity but rather work to communicate the presence of a female body on stage.

⁴⁸ Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/ Outlaw Bodies*, 35.

2-1 Kabuki Theater, *Words of Ayame*, and the Female Image

Kabuki theater's origins lay in the early seventeenth century with women's kabuki (*onna kabuki* 女歌舞伎) (1600–1629). Founded by Okuni, a former shrine dancer, she and her troupe of female performers danced along the riverbanks of Kyoto, dressed in the latest fashions of the day.⁴⁹ Okuni and her troop often performed risqué and insinuating plays about love affairs between playboys and courtesans. However, due to the violent, drunken, and immoral behavior audiences engaged in, the government perceived women's kabuki as a threat to the moral system and banned it countrywide by 1629.⁵⁰ *Wakashū kabuki* 若衆歌舞伎 (1612–1642; 1652) ran concurrent to women's kabuki with records tracing it to as early as 1617.⁵¹ *Wakashū kabuki* consisted of young males who performed male and female roles which “emphasized their feminine beauty.”⁵² In the mid-1600s due to similar problems which arose in women's kabuki, numerous edicts regulating *wakashū kabuki* were passed eventually culminating in a nationwide ban in 1652.⁵³

After the outright ban was rescinded, the Tokugawa government permitted *wakashū* to perform, under the condition that they shaved the pate of their heads, as required of the male population by law, in hopes of visually confirming their male identity.⁵⁴ Kabuki actors devised a purple cap (*murasaki boshi*) for *onnagata* to wear on their heads, covering up their missing forelocks and allowing them to maintain a female persona onstage. The iteration of Kabuki

⁴⁹ Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves and Legacy*, (New York: Kodansha International, 1997), 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵¹ Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 90.

⁵² Maki Isaka, Introduction to *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theater*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016) 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Joshua S. Mostow and Asato Ikeda, *A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Edo-Period Prints and Paintings*, 164.

theater discussed in this chapter is adult men's kabuki, *yarō kabuki* (野郎歌舞伎) (1629–1642; 1644–present day). During *yarō kabuki*'s infancy, various types of *onnagata* roles were created, including young *onnagata*, *wakashū onnagata*, and others, in which males of various ages portrayed female roles on stage.⁵⁵

Edo-period prints of Kabuki theaters in the capital of Edo published from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries offers information in the way of women's attendance, since they suggest a distinctly female presence in the audience. In Torii Kiyotstune's *Interior of a Kabuki Theater* (1765) (fig. 8), about one-third of the audience is composed of women. Women of all backgrounds are depicted, including a woman on a pilgrimage (center upper-left) and a mother nursing her child (middle-right by the balconies). Kunisada's *Flourishing Business at a Major Theater* (*Ōshibai han'ei no zu* 大芝居繁栄之図) (fig. 9) from 1859 reaffirms women maintained a strong presence during the latter part of the Edo period as well. Even though women readily consumed Kabuki theater, male agency in the form of *onnagata* played an active role in the discourse of the idealized female image. As anthropologist Jennifer Robertson argues:

The paragon of female-likeness in Tokugawa society remained the Kabuki *onnagata*... In effect, women's hypothetical achievements of "female" gender was tantamount to their impersonation of female-like males, who in turn, were not impersonating particular females but rather enacting an idealized version (and vision) of female-likeness. *Bakufu* [shogunal military administration] ideology did not and could not accommodate women's control over the construction and representation of "female" gender.⁵⁶

In sum, a woman's ideal performance was grounded in that of *onnagata*. Admiration of an *onnagata*'s performance of women on stage suggested that men were better able to embody femininity than women.

⁵⁵ Joshua S. Mostow and Asato Ikeda, *A Third Gender*, 164.

⁵⁶ Jennifer Robertson, "The Shingaku Woman," 106.

Words of Ayame is a chapter from a collection of writings by individuals from the Kabuki theater community called *The Actors' Analects*, and was a valuable resource for *onnagata* on the performance of femininity.⁵⁷ *Words of Ayame* consists of sayings from Yoshizawa Ayame, a revered *onnagata*, that actor and playwright Fukuoka Yagoshirō recorded during the early eighteenth century and published in 1776.⁵⁸ In it, Ayame lists codes of conduct befitting an *onnagata* which includes the maintenance of a “coquettish” exterior with a “chaste” heart, living one’s daily life as a woman, and consideration of placement on stage and body blocking.⁵⁹ As one of Ayame’s statements goes, “If an actress were to appear on the stage she could not express ideal feminine beauty, for she would rely only on the exploitation of her physical characteristics, and therefore not express the synthetic ideal. The ideal woman can be expressed only by a [male] actor.”⁶⁰

This quote coincides with the understanding in gender theory that gender and biological sex are not in a binding relationship. In saying actresses’ biology impedes them, Ayame eliminated the idea that women are capable of manufacturing ideal femininity. By this logic, Edo-period *onnagata* were perfect vehicles for producing femininity. Furthermore, prints could be adapted for whatever the publisher desired to release; ergo, they constituted prime media for conveying an undiluted and authentic “synthetic ideal.” Producing femininity calls for a method that organized the circulation of female images. Before Ayame’s edicts were published, codified systems for *onnagata* were established to perfect their craft, including gender acts and the reliance on *wakashū*, as a foundation for *onnagata* on which to base their feminine performances.

Words of Ayame is also significant for stressing that actors must not alternate between male and

⁵⁷ Charles Dunn, Introduction to *The Actors' Analects*, by Jishō Hashimonjiya, trans. Charles J. Dunn and Bunzō Torigoe. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) 11.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁹ Jishō Hashimonjiya, *The Actors' Analects*, 51-53.

⁶⁰ Maki Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki*, 7.

female roles, but to dedicate themselves to one or the other. In addition, Ayame also emphasized the importance for *onnagata* to engage in dressing as women throughout their daily lives and constant training of their *kata*, “fixed forms or patterns of performance.”⁶¹

In Kabuki male and female characters are categorized into various role types that have their own styles. Among the various roles in Kabuki theater, an *onnagata*’s carefully crafted gender acts consist of gender codes which express their character’s gender.⁶² These gender codes are composed of a process of stylized poses, gestures, dances and acting into gender acts. For example, gestures like combing long hair, biting a cloth, writing a love letter, looking off to the distance, etc., were all established gestures cultivated over time and performed by *onnagata* in order to communicate their femininity to their audience.⁶³

2-2 The Androgynous Body: *Wakashū* and the Construction of Femininity

This section endeavors to highlight the various gender acts *onnagata* are depicted performing in *yakusha-e* prints. Situating my visual analysis in gender theory, I argue that in modeling *onnagata* after *wakashū* to convey Kabuki actors’ perception of femininity, *onnagata* demonstrated how critical superimposition of the male identity was in creating an idealized female image. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze *yakusha-e* prints and to identify how *wakashū* and gender acts contributed to the construction of the female image.

First, I would suggest that images of *onnagata* do not innately subvert societal ideals of femininity. This is not to say subversions of the feminine ideal are absent in Kabuki theater and by extension *yakusha-e* prints, rather, whether or not an image of an *onnagata* subverted or reinforced ideals depended on their character’s role and purpose. Fundamentally, the

⁶¹ Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English-Language Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 178.

⁶² Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 97.

⁶³ Ibid.

superimposition of a male body as a signifier of a radical construction of sexed bodies is, as Butler writes: “...when gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.”⁶⁴ In this section, Butler is saying that when society regards sex and gender as independent, gender would be able to freely traverse bodies. In the case of *onnagata*, I would suggest that their male bodies provide a foothold upon which the “free-floating artifice” is superimposable. *Wakashū* as a model thus re-signifies the female body as a male body, which transforms *onnagata* into embodiments of the ideal woman. In this way, according to Mezur, *onnagata* actors’ intent behind their performance of female-likeness is not synonymous with “embodying or becoming the ‘essence of femininity,’” since *onnagata* referred to *wakashū* performativity as the archetype of the female image.

Before delving into *wakashū*’s impact on *onnagata*’s development of the idealized female image, it is critical to address who *wakashū* were. According to Joshua Mostow, a specialist in pre-modern Japanese literature and art, *wakashū* were generally males from the ages of “eleven to twenty-two or twenty-three,” during the Edo period but could be much older.⁶⁵ They are defined by art historian Asato Ikeda as: “...males who had not yet undergone the coming-of-age ceremony (*genpuku*) and thus did not have the social responsibilities of adults but were nevertheless sexually mature and available.”⁶⁶ In addition, Mostow suggests *wakashū* were a third gender because they are “...sexually ambidextrous and assumes the passive role when with an adult man, but the penetrative role with any kind of female.”⁶⁷ Images of *wakashū*

⁶⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6.

⁶⁵ Joshua S. Mostow, “Gender of Wakashu and the Grammar of Desire,” from *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2003), 53.

⁶⁶ Asato Ikeda, Introduction to *A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Edo-Period Prints and Paintings (1600–1868)*, Ontario: Royal Museum Ontario, 12.

⁶⁷ Ikeda, Introduction to *A Third Gender*, 23.

convey the impact their androgynous and feminine qualities had on prints of *onnagata* and women.

In Ishikawa Toyonobu's *A Triptych of Three Young Men (Wakashū Sanpuku Tsui 若衆三幅対)* (1750), the three *wakashū*'s gender ambiguity Toyonobu depicts them with is palatable (fig. 10). In particular, Toyonobu has rendered the figures on the far left and right of the print in a manner which situates them in an androgynous space. The positions of the two *wakashū*'s legs are crossed as one leg sweeps gracefully ahead of the other, a position that frequently appears in both *yakusha-e* prints featuring *onnagata* and in *bijin-ga* prints. Floral motifs decorate all three of their *haori* (jackets) that elegantly slip off their shoulders. Upon turning one's attention to the figure on the far right, one can see his hand holding up his kimono ever so slightly as another hand holds a twig from a blossomed cherry tree. When presented side-by-side, the two figures flanking the center image are very revealing of the androgynous aesthetic depictions that *wakashū* gave to print artists' creative freedom.

Returning to the *wakashū* on the left, the same design is present in Suzuki Harunobu's *Woman Putting on a Large Basket Hat (Amigasa ni te wo yaru musume 編笠に手をやる娘)* (1768–69) (fig. 11), which was produced after Toyonobu's print. Apart from the different production dates and the sexes of the figures, there are few stylistic differences. Both designs seem to focus on clothing patterns and rendering their subjects in an effeminate manner. Upon closer inspection, both the *wakashū*'s and woman's heads are lowered with downcast eyes, as a result, the figures' identical forms shows that poses and motifs were not inherently exclusive to male or female bodies. Furthermore, since Toyonobu's print predates Harunobu's, it suggests these poses circulated among artists. Recalling Butler's earlier statement on the fluidity of gender, the prints clearly reflect how gender operated freely at times. These prints of *wakashū* and

women demonstrate the close relationship between illustrations of the two sexes by providing a clear image of themes that are shared by both.

The identical poses of the Toyonobu's and Harunobu's figures raise questions about gender ambiguity in Edo-period prints. Further, in which ways did prints of *wakashū*, women, and *onnagata* participate in the circulation of femininity? The practice Edo-period artists had of imbuing figures with femininity led to the consideration of one's sex. In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir wrote:

One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human image takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the female and the eunuch that is called feminine.⁶⁸

Taking this quote into consideration, the prints reveal Edo-period perceptions of what constitutes as 'feminine' and 'woman' can be ambiguous. Moreover, it considers femininity as not determined by biology, but by social constructs. This recalls the sentiments reflected in the *Greater Learning for Women* and Ayame's anecdotes from *Words of Ayame* on femininity being performative rather than inherent to one's sex. The similar poses in Toyonobu's and Harunobu's prints exhibit how renditions of gender were not necessarily defined by the subject's biology.

2-3 Gender Acts, Iroke, and the Male Gaze in *Yakusha-e* Prints

An *onnagata*'s performance of descriptive femininity vis-à-vis Butler's perspectives on drag and imitation in her works *Gender Trouble* and "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" runs parallel to *onnagata*'s performance of femininity in *yakusha-e* prints. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler asks, "Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established?"⁶⁹ She also grappled with this question in "Imitation and

⁶⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 330.

⁶⁹ Judith Butler, "Preface," *Gender Trouble*, viii.

Gender Insubordination” where she designates drag as a “mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done...” Furthermore, she argues that gender is an imitation of a non-existent original.⁷⁰ *Onnagata* derived their performative acts from *wakashū* and observed female behavior. Concurrently, however, *onnagata* developed their imitation of femininity through *kata*, which itself became codified, and as a result placed *onnagata* in a unique position as embodiments, cultivators, and purveyors of the ideal descriptive female image. Based on the discussion above, this section will analyze *onnagata* performances of femininity in *yakusha-e* prints by Ippitsusai Bunchō and Katsukawa Shunjō.

As *onnagata* developed their craft, other methods of cultivating femininity besides using *wakashū* as models for the ideal female image emerged. With the advancement of their art as their goal, *onnagata* established gender training which consisted of apprenticeship under an *onnagata*, conducting one’s everyday life as a woman, and practicing observed feminine behaviors.⁷¹ Gender acts such as *kata* and costuming also allowed *onnagata* to signify a female character.⁷² As a result of their performance methodology, *onnagata* were situated as paragons of femininity.⁷³ Their gender acts are most exquisitely executed in the following works by Bunchō and Shunjō.

The Kabuki Actors Ichikawa Yazoō II and the Onnagata Nakamura Matsue I by Bunchō (fig. 12) reflect the social behavior women during the Edo period were expected to perform. Each actor is identifiable by the crests located on their sleeves.⁷⁴ Despite the play the print

⁷⁰ Butler, Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” 21.

⁷¹ Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 92.

⁷² Morinaga, Introduction to *Onnagata, A Labyrinth in Gendering*, 17.

⁷³ Maki Morinaga. “The Gender of Onnagata as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity.” *Positions* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 245. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 7, 2015), 255.

⁷⁴ Yazoō II’s crest consists of three squares located inside one another (*mimasu* 三升) and Matsue I’s is known as “the two song books” (*gion mamori* 祇園守). For examples of each family crest, refer to <http://www.kabuki21.com/mon.php>.

depicts being currently unknown, the print offers valuable information for the instruction of female roles to students as reflected in Ayame's following musing:

Jūjiro said that women keep their right knee upright when half-kneeling, and men their left, and that it is the same when they start walking. This is what he taught his pupils, but the Great Yoshizawa told him on one occasion when they were alone that although this was in fact the case, it depended upon the look of the thing, and one should not raise the knee that is on the side of the audience. If one went by consistency, it would not be Kabuki. It is probably good, after all, to make a mixture of half realism and half imagination.⁷⁵

Ayame's comments on how women led with their right leg, while men with their left provides further insight into how men performed male and female roles in Kabuki theater.⁷⁶ As much as Ayame underscored the importance of observing how women presented themselves in society, he also stressed the necessity of considering how aesthetically sound an *onnagata*'s representation is on stage. For instance, although society may have perceived it as customary for a woman's right knee to be raised, to Ayame if it interfered with the audience's experience of the play, this norm would be forfeited. In the case of *The Kabuki Actors Ichikawa Yazoō II and the Onnagata Nakamura Matsue I*, Bunchō depicted Matsue I with his right knee slightly raised as per the *onnagata* teacher Jūjiro's teachings. However, the composition is arranged in a manner harmonious with the ideal point-of-view for the audience; therefore, it enhanced one's enjoyment instead of tarnishing it.

Upon closer reading, Ayame's and Jūjiro's incongruous statements indicate an *onnagata*'s license to oppose societal norms if they conflicted with the play's overall aesthetic. Consequently, their difference in opinions reveals *onnagata* were not expected to always invoke societal feminine ideals on stage. Moreover, this quote demonstrates *onnagata* were able to manipulate their character's actions in a way they considered to be most congruous to the play's

⁷⁵ Hachimonjiya, *The Actors' Analects*, 52.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 52.

aesthetic. Compositionally, while Bunchō's composition seems to contradict Ayame's opinion, the raised right knee is used as a device to help unite Yaōzo II and Matsue I in addition to guiding the viewer's gaze through the print.

What the female form then rests upon are men's/actors' interpretation of the female body, rather than solely mimicking women's customs, actions, and attitudes. The concept behind this interpretation is dependent on the method of *kata*. According to Samuel Leiter, a scholar of Kabuki theater, *kata* is passed down through each generation of actors. Within each female role type, there are fixed *kata* that indicate the type of woman the audience is viewing on stage. For example, an *onnagata*'s *kata* help differentiate the countenance of a samurai's wife verses a courtesan. Also, *kata* is fluid, meaning that each generation of actors contributes their own *kata* to their predecessors. In addition, *kata* is descriptive of a character's sex as demonstrated by Matsue I's raised right knee in Bunchō's print. Interpreting this action as *kata* adds another dimension to understanding Matsue I's gender performance in the print as a model of descriptive feminine customs. By doing this pose, Matsue I is presenting himself as a woman following etiquette befitting of his character's gender.

In this way, *onnagata* actors used *wakashū* as a template for their *kata* as a method to carefully reproduce and repackage their study of female role performance into new *kata*, thus positioning *onnagata* acting as the nexus of stylized femininity. In the same vein, depictions of *onnagata* in *yakusha-e* prints followed similar aesthetic criteria as exhibited in the prints referenced in Chapter One. Rather than focus on the accurate representation of women on stage, *onnagata*'s goal was to produce and transmit a female-like image which was a combination of biological female behaviors observed by *onnagata*, a *wakashū*'s androgyny, and *kata*.

In order to understand how *yakusha-e* prints demonstrate the absence of a divide between men and women, we turn to Shunjō's print *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire* (fig. 13), a print that captures the actor looking over his left shoulder with his lips slightly parted. Kikunojō III's slightly undone kimono hangs off his left shoulder baring part of his chest. The illustration of Kikunojō III in a disheveled state is reminiscent of the young woman in Kiyonaga's *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby* from *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* (fig. 2). Both images reveal breasts, while the breasts in Kiyonaga's series are natural, in Shunjō's print hints at the superimposition of the female image on the male body. Consequently, the male body functions as a site for the narrative of the female image. As with Bunchō's print, the only indication the person who we are looking at is an *onnagata* is the cap affixed to the top of Kikunojō III's head, otherwise, the figure is in every way a female one. Even the crests, which would identify the male actors, are absent. At a Kabuki theater, while the audience would be aware of the *onnagata*'s sex, Shunjō's print and other *yakusha-e* prints of *onnagata* of this nature, stripped away at signifiers of the male body and replaced them with ones associated with a female body. In these ways, Shunjō's *yakusha-e* print replicated the manner in which women were depicted in *bijin-ga* prints. Besides gender training, Bunchō's print reveals another technique *onnagata* employed to generate an archetypal female image.

Another feature associated with women in *bijin-ga* prints is *iroke*, erotic allure, which is also present in *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire*.⁷⁷ An *onnagata* secretes *iroke* through their performance of female-likeness and gender acts they perform on stage. According to Mezur, *onnagata* can express *iroke* through various *kata* as a means to make something erotic, and to "direct their [the audience's] sexual experience."⁷⁸ Not exclusive to

⁷⁷ Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 97.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

onnagata, women such as courtesans also employed *iroke*. Some examples of *kata* associated with *iroke* are: a glimpse of the red under kimono, layers of kimono, and a low collar at the back.⁷⁹ In regards to Shunjō's print, Kikunojō III's aforementioned loose yukata is an example of *iroke*. Additionally, the actor's role as a courtesan is captured through the hair and its ornamentation, while *iroke* is expressed through the pose and costuming. Thus, by employing *kata* associated with the courtesan role type, Edo-period *onnagata* directed audiences to overlook their biologically male bodies and be attracted to the feminine qualities they presented on stage.⁸⁰

With respect to the preceding discussion, *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire* also underscores the relationship between *onnagata*, the male gaze, and *yakusha-e* prints. Kikunojō I, Kikunojō III's predecessor, said the following regarding *onnagatas*' target of attraction in Kabuki theater:

It is bad for an *onnagata* to have female fans. It would be inconvenient if one wanted to marry him. He should have many male friends who wish there were a woman like him. If he is going to receive female support, he should get them to admire the kinds of hair ornaments, combs, headdresses, and so forth that maids, prostitutes and city girls will emulate. He should be setting his sights on making fans of those women who see in him a woman like themselves.⁸¹

Kikunojō I's words bear their weight in what *onnagata* believed men and women ought to desire. In the case of women, Ayame also stated that an *onnagata* failed at their performance of femininity if women perceived them as an object of lust.⁸² Rather, *onnagata* considered their performances successful if women admired and emulated them. Icons of a stylized and idealized package of femininity, *onnagata* were supposed to be a reference on fashion and, depending on their role, exemplify virtue for women. If an *onnagata* became the object of male attention, in

⁷⁹ Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 147.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 148–49.

⁸¹ Samuel L. Leiter, *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966–2001*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2002), 153. The quote originates from Segawa Kikunojō I's (*Onnagata Hiden* 女方秘伝), however, Leiter's translation is from page 36 of *Kabuki no Denshō* (歌舞伎の伝承) by Suwa Haruo (諏訪春雄).

⁸² Hashimonjiya, *The Actors' Analects*, 49–50.

other words, the object of the male gaze, it meant that he achieved a performance of the ideal woman whom men desire.

The transformation of the male body into a female body through print design permits the projection of the male gaze. Notably, *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire* demonstrates Kikunojō III's conversion into an object of male desire. Kikunojō's averted gaze, which invites us to look at him in the same manner as women in *bijin-ga* prints, thereby situating him in the passive female role. By Shunjō formatting Kikunojō III's body in this manner, the *onnagata* became a signifier of *iroke*. Moreover, his costuming and pose were in keeping with the *iroke* courtesans were perceived to possess during the Edo period. Thus, in terms of gender theory, the gender acts Kikunojō III is depicted engaging in are all a part of the spectacle of female-likeness produced in the Edo period.

In the case of *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire*, the actor's countenance captures a look of longing or pensive thought. The transformation of Kikunojō III's body from male to female further subjected him to the sexually objectifying male gaze, therefore capturing the eroticism necessary to convey the role of a courtesan. From this, we may conclude *onnagata* maintained a stratified position of desire between the sexes during the Edo period, or, at least endeavored to achieve this status in the eyes of their audience. As we shall see, through *yakusha-e* images of the character Agemaki from the Kabuki play *Sukeroku*, other factors besides *iroke* contributed to artists' depictions of courtesans.

2-4 A Study of the Courtesan Role in Kabuki: *Sukeroku*

In this section, after a brief explanation of courtesans during the Edo period, I shall focus on depictions of the courtesan role type in *yakusha-e* prints, with special attention paid to a courtesan named Agemaki. During the Edo period, courtesans and geisha performers like

onnagata were considered epitomes of femininity. In Kabuki plays, courtesans portrayed by *onnagata* often entered the occupation after their lover or husband faced a serious financial issue or required the money to solve some sort of situation. *The Greater Learning for Courtesans* (*Yūjo Daigaku* 数女大学) (1807), features a list of ideals for courtesans to follow. The text provides a way to understand perspectives on the behaviors and actions of courtesans during the early nineteenth century. Two axioms on the list coincide with the depiction of courtesans in *yakusha-e* prints, the first of which reads, “The heart of a courtesan more than her face must be superior,” and the second, “When you go out to parade or to see a play, consider well your future and by all means expertly play the womanly and attractive role.”⁸³ Courtesans depicted in *yakusha-e* prints over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries show heart, beauty, and femininity all at once. The first axiom is depicted in *yakusha-e* prints showing *onnagata* engaging in actions displaying loyalty, bravery, or love. As for the second axiom, it coincides with the consideration *onnagata* needed to take in their approach when portraying courtesans. In the case of prints illustrating these roles, artists, too, would have to consider methods to capture a character’s femininity.

One way to explain these varying needs is to take up the example of the courtesan Agemaki from the play *Sukeroku* (助六), a play first performed in 1713 in Edo at the Yamamuraza theater.⁸⁴ The play is about a man known as Sukeroku, an alias taken in order to exact revenge on the man who killed his father. During Sukeroku’s search for the murderer, he became the courtesan Agemaki’s lover. Sukeroku’s mother, believing he is neglecting his duties by being with Agemaki, sends Agemaki a letter ordering her to cease their relationship. Yet, the

⁸³ Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure*, 186–187.

⁸⁴ “Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Zakura,” Kabuki 21, accessed January 7, 2017. <https://www.kabuki21.com/sukeroku.php>.

courtesan not only remains with Sukeroku, she also decides to help find the murderer, and resolves to repair the mother and son's estranged relationship. In a twist, the murderer is revealed to be living under the alias Ikyū, Agemaki's wealthiest customer. Upon discovering this, Agemaki vows to kill Ikyū and then commit suicide. However, Sukeroku finds out, challenges Ikyū to a duel, and wins.⁸⁵ For her loyalty to Sukeroku, Agemaki was regarded as one of the great heroines of Kabuki theater.

Print designer Katsukawa Shunshō (1726–1792) chose to draw attention to the way Nakamura Rikō I captured Agemaki's femininity in his print *The Onnagata Actor Nakamura Rikō I as Agemaki with Two Attendants* (fig. 14). The print, published in 1782, illustrates Agemaki flanked on either side by *kamuro* (young attendants), and the relatively scant background allows the viewer's full attention to reside completely on the figures. The print reflects Shunshō's decision to identify Rikō I as an embodiment of an actual courtesan, rather than illustrate a scene of the *onnagata* performing the role as such. The composition accomplished this through costuming and *kata*. For instance, the red slip peeking from behind the kimono collar in this image is as mentioned earlier in this section is a *kata* meant to invoke *iroke*. That said, Rikō I's *kata* is identical to how courtesans were depicted in *bijin-ga* prints, with both arms apparently underneath the obi (sash worn around a kimono), a device widely used in *bijin-ga* prints as a means call forth *iroke*.

Mezur's study of costuming for the play *Sukeroku* entitled *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo* (*Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Sakura* 助六由縁江戸桜) illustrates how wardrobe contributes to the fabrication of the courtesan role. Mezur attributes costuming as one of the main factors in constructing an *onnagata*'s body, as exemplified in the way that colors, designs, symbols, and

⁸⁵ "Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Zakura."

ornaments transform the male actor Rikō I's body to reflect that of a courtesan.⁸⁶ Mezur continues on to say gender acts involved depended on the performativity of the costume. This is shown in Shunshō's ability to render Rikō I in a manner exuding poise and charm, which is in part indebted to the wardrobe. In the print, Rikō I is rendered in a manner which emboldens his character with an aura of womanliness and attractiveness as stated in the *Greater Learning for Courtesans*.

About two decades after Shunshō's print of Agemaki, Kitagawa Utamaro illustrated a print entitled *Agemaki and Sukeroku* (*Agemaki to Sukeroku* 揚巻と助六) (fig. 15) for his series *True Feelings Compared: Fonts of Love* (*Jikkei iro no bimei iemi* 実競色の美名家見). Instead of depicting Kabuki actors, Utamaro depicted a biological man and woman as Agemaki and Sukeroku. Since there are various Kabuki versions of the story, finding evidence in the print to definitively identify which version it refers to is difficult. However, based on their pose in the composition, I believe the depicted scene is Agemaki hiding Sukeroku from Ikyū. The previous scene describes a confrontation between the lovers, when Sukeroku accuses Agemaki of letting a customer into her bed after seeing her show someone out of her brothel. The "customer" is revealed to be Sukeroku's mother, but this is learned only after he berates Agemaki for her alleged infidelity. After Agemaki's proved her fidelity, Ikyū suddenly appears, sparking the courtesan to hide Sukeroku. By illustrating Agemaki as a woman rather than as an *onnagata* actor portraying a woman, Utamaro's print does not contain as many stylizations as Shunshō's needed in order to convey the role Rikō I plays is that of a woman. Agemaki in Utamaro's print is simply an illustration of a female courtesan performing a virtuous act.

⁸⁶ Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 201.

In the print, Sukeroku is shielded from prying eyes by Agemaki as she gazes over her shoulder. Sukeroku's disheveled appearance insinuates he hastily hid in order to avoid Ikyū. Utamaro's signature *bijin-ga* aesthetics are presented in this print, namely Utamaro's use of physiognomic traits as a method to tell a subject's occupation and status.⁸⁷ For example, the pins and combs in Agemaki's hair, along with the red under-robe also seen in Shunshō's print, denote her profession as a courtesan. However, in the case of both prints, if the subject matter's identifying text was absent it would be difficult to determine who and what is depicted. The aim Shunshō's and later in Utamaro's print is to capture the type of woman they are depicting through their mannerisms, clothing, and the aura they emanate. More importantly, the prints draw attention to the difference in focus between illustrating the same story with different subjects. The objective of Utamaro's Agemaki is to convey a woman performing the role of her position, romantic status, and virtue. In comparison, the intent of Shunshō's Agemaki may be interpreted as an endeavor to communicate Rikō I's character's role in the play to viewers.

2-5: Kunisada's Images of Women during the Nineteenth Century

Compared to the courtesan role, the role of a dutiful wife offered another avenue to pursue perspectives on womanhood. Further developments related to depicting ideals of femininity in the Edo period would in part be molded by a series of moral reforms and guidelines. During the Tempō era (1830–1844), a series of reforms from 1841–1843 were passed by the government in order to fix economic issues through social reform. Focusing on Confucian morals, the reforms canceled debts held by allies of the government, encouraged price controls, and most importantly, censored art and literature, limiting the types of subjects that could be depicted in woodblock

⁸⁷ Julie Nelson Davis, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 85.

prints.⁸⁸ It is within this climate, where morality impressed its presence upon society, that the final prints we shall discuss were produced.

The Tempō reforms instatement brought regulations prohibiting the depiction of courtesans and other figures considered “immoral.” As in the case of Kunisada’s print *Tomoe Gozen*, the types of women represented in actor prints were also affected. The influence on regulations placed on reforms can also be seen in the increase in production of plays focusing on filial piety and moralistic characters in *yakusha-e* prints. Okaru from the Kabuki play *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Chūshingura* 忠臣蔵), for example, demonstrates this change in the sorts of women depicted in woodblock prints. Later, Kunisada’s prints from *Biographies of Famous Women*, *Ancient and Modern* illustrated women’s roles during the Bakumatsu period. The depiction of femininity shown in Kunisada’s Kabuki-themed prints are influenced by at least three factors – beliefs surrounding wives’ duties in Edo-period Japan, the theme of the story in question, and the actors’ performativity.

Published during the Bakumatsu period, Kunisada’s *Actors Ichimura Kakitsu IV as Koshimoto Okaru and Sawamura Tosshō II as Hayano Kanpei* (fig. 16), reflects the period’s disposition to depict women from moralistic plays. *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was inspired by the ‘Ako affair’ of 1701 when the shogun’s court official provoked Lord of Ako to draw his sword in the court thereby committing a capital offense.⁸⁹ Since the play is a literary theme inspired by true events, it was subjected to censorship by the City Magistrate. As a consequence, *yakusha-e* prints like Kunisada’s would be prohibited and found to be “politically or morally

⁸⁸ The Editor of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Tempō reforms,” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified July 20, 1998, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Tempo-reforms>.

⁸⁹ David Bell, *Chushingura and the Floating World: The Representation of Kanadehon Chushingura in Ukiyo-e Prints*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 2001), 10.

offensive.”⁹⁰ Hence, under the reforms and restrictions, Kabuki and *yakusha-e* by extension featured characters who exemplified qualities such as self-discipline, virtue, and loyalty.⁹¹ As with Kunisada’s *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern* in Chapter One, the narrative of feminine virtue persisted as demonstrated in Kunisada’s print of a scene from *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*.

Actors Ichimura Kakitsu IV as Koshimoto Okaru and Samamura Tosshō II as Hayano Kanpei documents the role type of a faithful wife. According to Leiter, the purpose of wives in Kabuki theater was to exhibit steadfast devotion to her husband through supporting his endeavors, no matter how reckless.⁹² The subject, Okaru (a lady-in-waiting) appears in a scene from Act III of the play. In the story, Okaru and her lover Kanpei (a samurai of the same household) were secretly meeting, when unbeknownst to them, their lord was placed under house arrest and sentenced to execution. The moment Kunisada selected to depict captures Okaru’s unwavering love and loyalty to Kanpei. Okaru’s devotion is conveyed through a travel dance (*michiyuki mono* 道行物), which typically follows a pair of lovers on their way to commit suicide.⁹³ The lovers are shown struggling for the sword as Okaru beseeches Kanpei to not commit suicide for neglecting his duty, but to runaway to her hometown and get married. Eventually, her pleading dissuades Kanpei, who reluctantly agrees to do as she asks.⁹⁴ Later in the play Okaru once again demonstrates her dedication when unbeknownst to Kanpei, she sells

⁹⁰ David Bell, *Chushingura and the Floating World*, 11.

⁹¹ Donald H. Shively, “Popular Culture,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan: Early Modern Japan*, vol. 4, eds. John Whitney Hall and James L. McClain, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 759.

⁹² Samuel L. Leiter, “From Gay to *Gei*: The *Onnagata* and the Creation of Kabuki’s Female Characters.” *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Winter 1999-2000): 507, accessed November 23, 2015. <http://www.jstpr.org/stable/41154044>.

⁹³ Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 234.

⁹⁴ Aubrey S. Halford and Giovanna M. Halford, *The Kabuki Handbook: A Guide to Understanding and Appreciation, with Summaries of Favorite Plays, Explanatory Notes, and Illustrations*, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1971), 141.

herself to a brothel in order to assist her husband's endeavor to raise funds for his vendetta against the court official.

As gender performers, *onnagata* implemented gender coding that corresponded to the laws enforced by the Tokugawa government. Regarded by the government as degenerate and immoral, Kabuki theater still managed to reflect the Confucian mentality of the Edo period. *Onnagata*'s use of *wakashū* androgyny, observation of women, and *kata* resulted in female performativity subsuming the male identity. *Onnagata* accomplished this by borrowing from the model of *wakashū* as being the epitome of youthful androgynous fashion and beauty, and then superimposing it onto the female form. Agemaki and Okaru both represent roles where *onnagata*, through prescribed gender performances, were able to relay the continuous theme of a virtuous woman full of feminine charm to their audiences. In sum, *onnagata* illustrate the fluidity of Edo-period gender performance.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the question of the idealized female image during the Edo period as illustrated in *bijin-ga* and *yakusha-e* woodblock prints. In the process, I revealed how literary works such as *Greater Learning for Women*, *Imagawa for Women*, and *Words of Ayame* influenced the creation of an idealized femininity. The use of *jokun* as source material by artists in Chapter One demonstrate its impact on the development, reinforcement, and dissemination of the idealized female image in *bijin-ga* prints. Chapter Two emphasized the idea of performativity in the portrayal of an ideal female image by a male Kabuki actor. I also argued that the circulation of these idealized images relied heavily on the popularity of *yakusha-e* that featured *onnagata* performing these roles.

The research amassed thus far exhibits that Edo-period Japan viewed femininity as a learnable trait, rather than something that is inherent to one's sex. In particular, Kiyonaga's *fūzoku* series and his series based on *jokun* primers for women, as discussed in Chapter One, followed by the discussion of *yakusha-e* featuring *onnagata* in Chapter Two, indicate how crucial performance was to the construction of the ideal female image. Furthermore, it exposes print artists' ability to interpret women's bodies and narratives in order to highlight particular traits, moments, or behaviors that reflect the circulating ideals. Based on the precepts from *Imagawa for Women*, prints from Kiyonaga's series *A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women* and Hokusai's illustrations for *Hokusai's Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* draws attention to roles women were expected to occupy or perform. In particular, *Hokusai's Illustrated Imagawa for Women* demonstrated two things: first, how prints functioned as a tool for women to vicariously experience female roles that served as behavioral exemplars, and second, that a virtuous woman could be a valued source of wisdom for men. We also looked at

Kunisada's *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern*, which demonstrated that, even in cases where women held high stations, Edo-period ideals with regard to female roles in the family or towards one's lord could and did take precedence over a woman's skills and achievements.

In Chapter Two, the print images selected reveal that Edo-period *onnagata* performances were not simply relegated to the imitation of women; rather, their performances were an amalgamation of *wakashū* androgynous bodies, observations on female behavior, and a system of stylized gestures known as *kata*, something that comes into particularly clear focus when *yakusha-e* prints are analyzed through the lens of *Words of Ayame*. We saw that Ippitsusai Bunchō's *The Kabuki Actors Ichikawa Yazoō II and the Onnagata Nakamura Matsue I* establishes the right of the *onnagata* and the artist to reinterpret or ignore canons of performance if the aesthetic quality of the play and/or print was enhanced. Nonetheless, a print artist's capacity to effectively capture an *onnagata*'s *kata* was still quintessential to conveying a believable female image. In effect, by prioritizing one role type's traits over another, an artist had the ability to change their audience's response to that type.

We saw this at work in *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire* by Shunjō and *The Onnagata Actor Nakamura Rikō as Agemaki with Two Attendants* by Shunshō, both examples of prints that indicate, when necessary, a courtesan's role could evoke *iroke* or virtue. As for *yakusha-e* prints of the nineteenth century such as those mentioned in Chapter One, the types of women featured as exemplars of feminine ideals were in part shaped by moral reforms that dictated the types of females represented. Prints that featured female characters such as Okaru from *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* denote the precedence that communicating the character's role type held over the story in the artist's conceptual design.

Collectively, both chapters reveal two types of idealism operating in prints concerning the female image. In Chapter One *jokun* related works and *fūzoku* present prints as prescriptive, a source for dogmatic feminine behavior. *Fūzoku* demonstrated the prescriptive through the performance of customs whereas *jokun* utilized example of positive and negative behaviors as well as biographical figures to educate their audience on the preferred performance of femininity. The print images discussed in Chapter Two exhibit the descriptive aspects of the feminine ideal through gender acts, *kata*, and *iroke*. These prints expose *onnagata* as illustrators and embodiments of a synthetic ideal of femininity which was not always concerned with portraying moralistic behavior.

Finally, gender theory provided me with a valuable method of engaging with this visual material. Judith Butler's position of gender as an imitation of which there is no known original reveals the circular nature of the feminine ideal between prescriptive *bijin-ga* and descriptive *yakusha-e* prints. Both genres draw attention to the imitation of femininity of which is based, with authority, in an unknown original. Further, by applying Butler's statement about gender performance to *onnagata* themed *yakusha-e* prints, we learned the female image communicated via "discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex."⁹⁵ To this end, my research concludes that the portrayal of the female image in Edo period woodblock prints was in part crafted by illustrative interpretations of *jokun* texts, sociocultural beliefs, and gender acts found in Kabuki theater, all of which contributed to the crafting of idealized female imagery.

⁹⁵ Judith Butler, "Preface," *Gender Trouble*, viii.

APPENDIX

The following is from *Onna Imagawa* by Sawada Kichi (207-211) which was translated by Marcia Yonemoto in *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan*. Please refer to page 51 of the text for more information.

1. One's natural inclinations are distorted; the way of women is never clear;
2. Young women should not make irrelevant pilgrimages to shrines and temples simply for enjoyment;
3. Failing to right even the slightest wrong will lead to bitterness and estrangement from others;
4. [Do not] disregard important things and talk indiscreetly to people;
5. [Do not] forget to deeply honor one's parents or neglect the path of filial duty;
6. [Do not] scorn or make light of one's husband and flaunt oneself, for this disregards the way of heaven;
7. [Do not] turn your back on the proper way in order to covet and pursue profit;
8. [Do not] disparage or think inferior people who follow the proper way;
9. [Beware of] flatterers; those who are watching others;
10. [Beware of] those who are quick-tempered; those who are jealous; those who are not embarrassed to ridicule others;
11. [Do not] go astray trying to ape womanly virtues, not be overly judgmental and disparage others;
12. [Do not] involve yourself with the intrigues of others, not rejoice in other's suffering;
13. [Do not] dress and adorn yourself beautifully and then eat in a slovenly manner;

14. [Do not] be ignorant of the ways of others, both lofty and base while indulging yourself;
15. [Do not] scorn others for their shortcomings while flaunting your own knowledge;
16. [Do not] address monks and nuns directly, nor approach them;
17. [Do not] fail to understand your place [in society], neither indulging nor going without;
18. [Do not] fail to discern between good and bad servants, nor fail to correct [their behavior];
19. [Do not] treat your parents-in-law poorly, or you will earn the scorn of others;
20. [Do not] neglect your step children, then ignore the criticism of others;
21. With regard to men, if you even briefly draw closer [to them] it is overly intimate;
22. [Do not] shun those who behave properly while adoring those friends who fawn over you;
23. When people visit, it is rude to reveal your bad humor or take your annoyance out on them.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1 Torii Kiyonaga, *Obitoki* (帯解) from *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* (*Fūzoku Azuma no Nishiki* 風俗東之錦), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1785, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 2 Torii Kiyonaga, *Woman in Bathrobe and Mother Playing with Baby* (*Ko wo ayasu Haha to yokugo Onna* 子をあやす母と浴後の女) from *Brocades of the East in Daily Life* (*Fūzoku Azuma no Nishiki* 風俗東之錦), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1785, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 3 Torii Kiyonaga, *A Woman Who Neglects Her Husband's Parents Invites Criticism from A Young Girl's Education from Imagawa for Women*, (*Jijo Hōkun Onna Imagawa* 児女實訓女今川), nishiki-e; ink and color on paper, c. 1784, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 4 Torii Kiyonaga, *A Jealous Woman* from *A Young Girl's Education* from *Imagawa for Women* (*Jijo Hōkun Onna Imagawa* 兒女實訓女今川), nishiki-e; ink and color on paper, c. 1784, Harvard Art Museums.



Fig. 5 Katsushika Hokusai, *Iwafuji Beating Onoe* from *Hokusai's Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* (*Hokusai Ehon Onna Imagawa* 北斎絵本女今川), illustrated book, 1820s, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

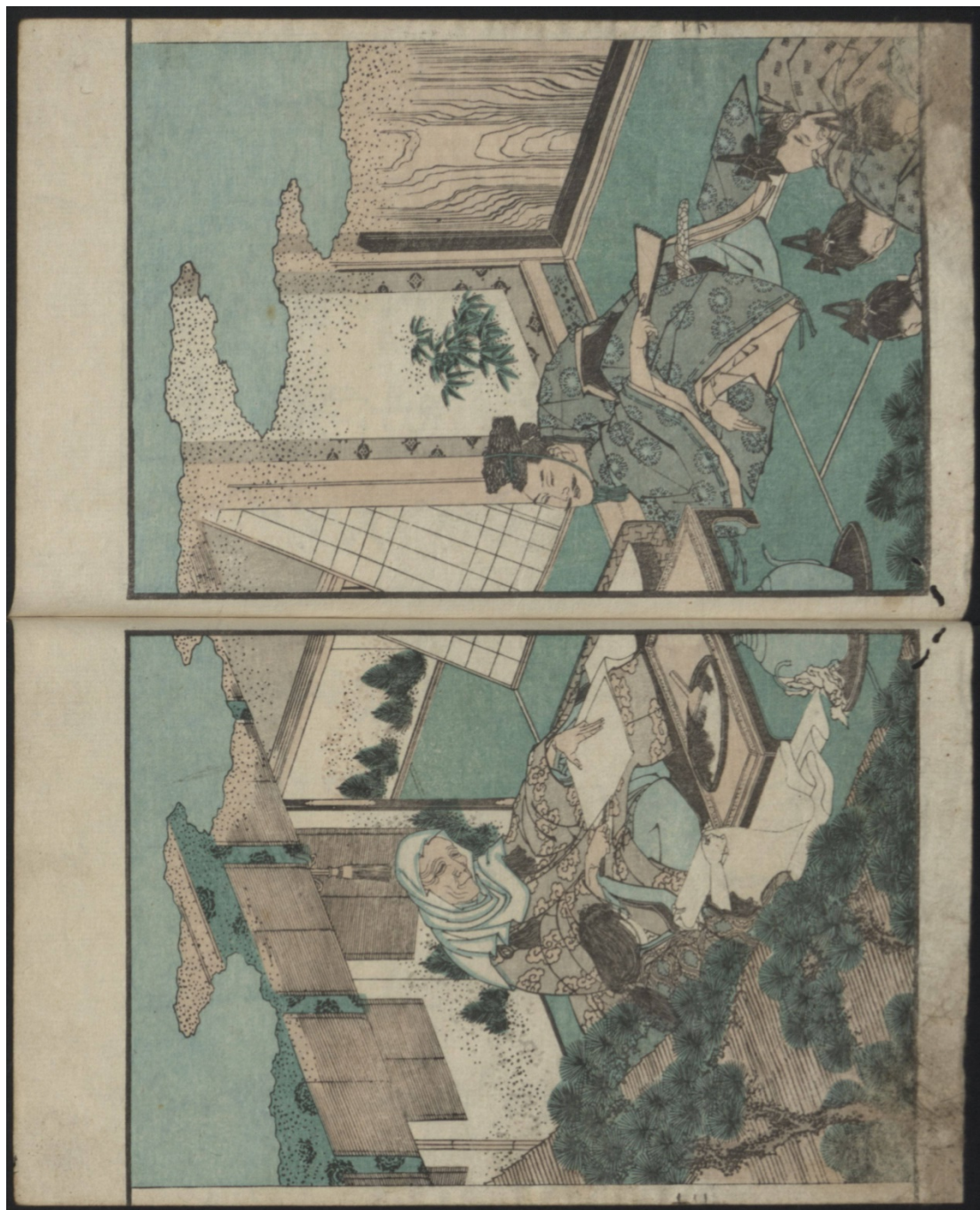


Fig. 6

Katsushika Hokusai, *The Zen Nun of Matsushita* from Hokusai's *Illustrated Book Imagawa for Women* (*Hokusai Ehon Onna Imagawa* 北斎絵本女今川), illustrated book, 1820s, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 7 Utagawa Kunisada, *Tomoe Gozen* (巴御前) from *Biographies of Famous Women, Ancient and Modern* (*Kokin meifudin* 古今名婦伝), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1859, National Diet Library Digital Collections.

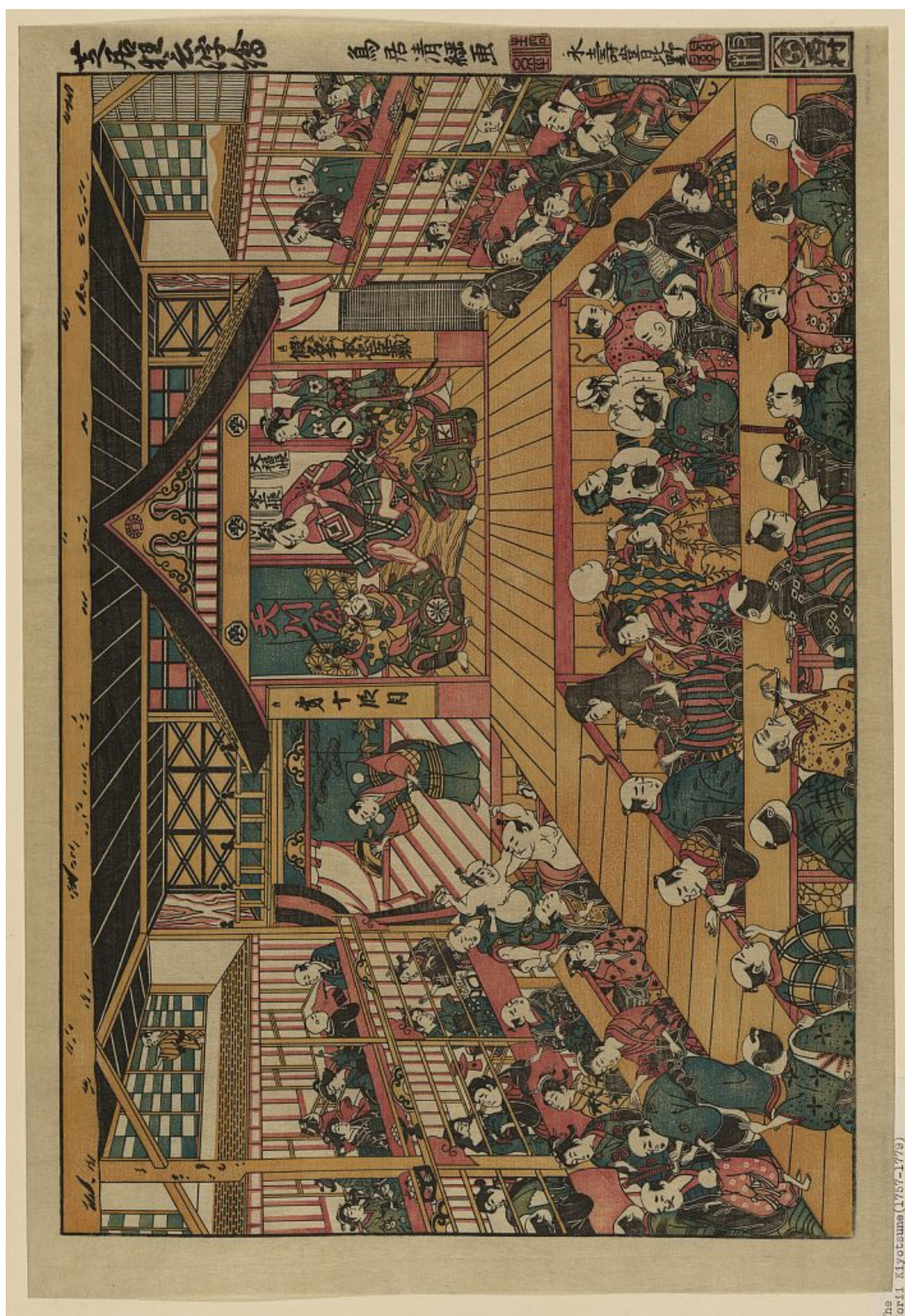


Fig. 8 Torii Kiyotsume, *Interior of a Kabuki Theater, nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1765, Library of Congress.



Fig. 9 Utagawa Kunisada, *Flourishing Business at a Major Theater* (*Ōshibai han'ei no zu* 大芝居繁栄之図), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1859, MFA; Boston.

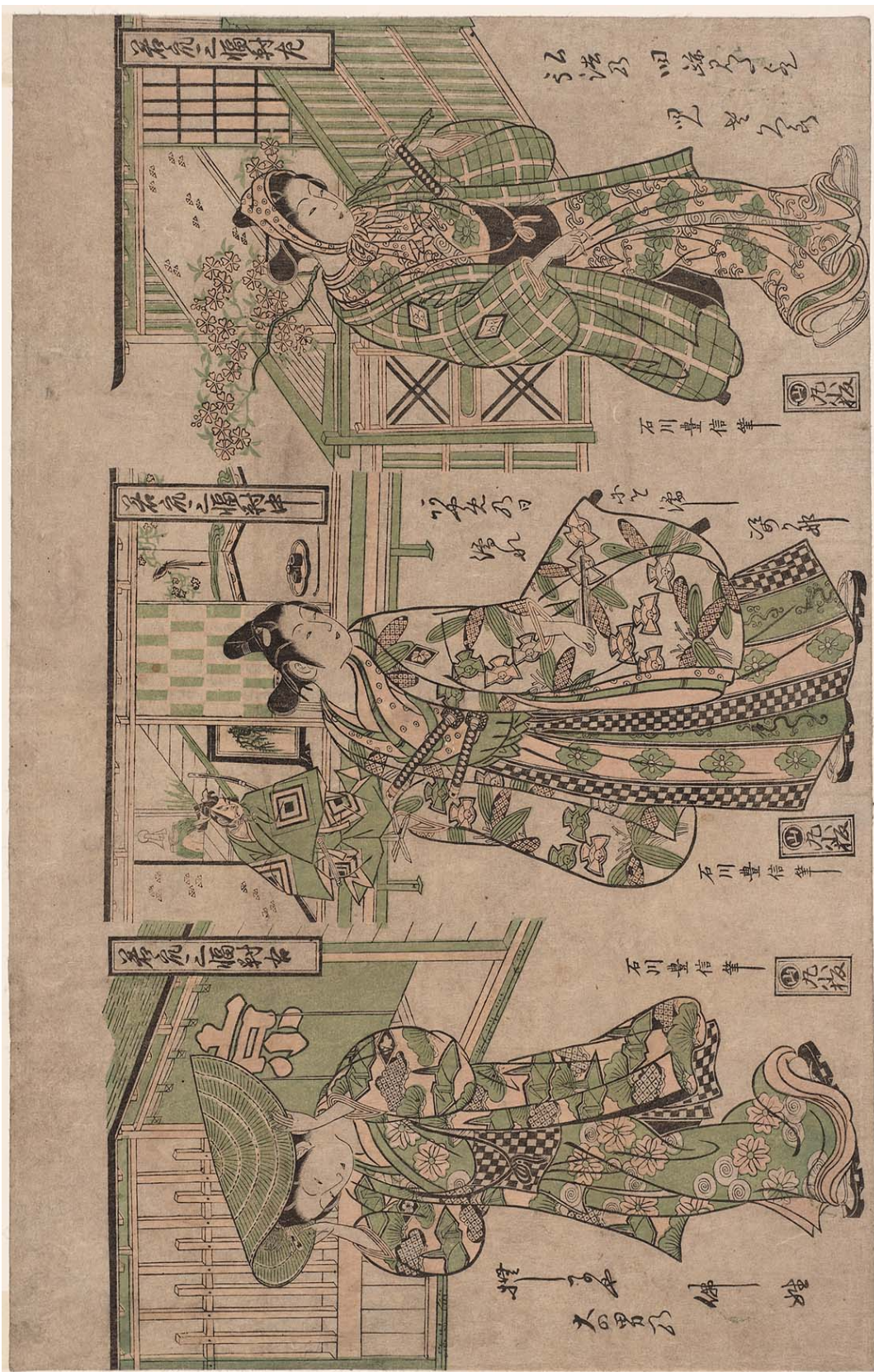


Fig. 10 Ishikawa Toyonobu, *A Triptych of Three Young Men* (*Wakashū Sanpuku Tsui* 若衆三幅対), *benizuri-e*; ink and limited color on paper, 1750, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 11 Suzuki Harunobu, *Woman Putting on a Large Basket Hat* (*Amigasa ni te wo yaru musume* 編笠に手をやる娘), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1768–69, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 12 Ippitsusai Bunchō, *The Kabuki Actors Ichikawa Yazoō II and the Onnagata Nakamura Matsue I* (*Ichikawa Yazoō to Nakamura Matsue I* 市川八百蔵と中村松江), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1771, Honolulu Museum of Art.



Fig. 13 Katsukawa Shunjō, *The Actor Segawa Kikunojō III as a Courtesan in Summer Attire* (*Sandaime Segawa Kikunojō no Yūjo* 三代目瀬川菊之丞遊女), nishiki-e; ink and color on paper, 1780–1784, MFA: Boston.



Fig. 14 Katsukawa Shunshō, *The Onnagata Actor Nakamura Rikō I as Agemaki with Two Attendants* (*Nakamura Rikō no Agemaki* 中村里好の揚巻), *nishiki-e*; ink and color on paper, 1782, Honolulu Museum of Art.



Fig. 15 Kitagawa Utamaro, *Agemaki and Sukeroku* (Agemaki to Sukeroku 揚巻と助六) from *True Feelings Compared: Fonts of Love* (Jikkei iro no bimei iemi 実競色の美名家見), nishiki-e; ink and color on paper, 1798, Japanese Prints London.



Fig. 16 Utagawa Kunisada, *Actors Ichimura Kakitsu IV as Koshimoto Okaru and Sawamura Tosshō II as Hayano Kanpei (Sawamura Tosshō no Hayano Kanpei and Ichimura Kakitsu no Koshimoto Okaru 澤村 訥升の早野寛平と市村家橘のこしもとおかる)*, nishiki-e, ink and color on paper, 1865, Honolulu Museum of Art.

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